



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
FORT WORTH DISTRICT, CORPS OF ENGINEERS
P. O. BOX 17300
FORT WORTH, TEXAS 76102-0300
15 October 2007

Somerville Lake Office

DEER HARVEST PROPOSAL WITHIN CORPS OPERATED PARKS
U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS, FORT WORTH DISTRICT, SOMERVILLE LAKE

Background. Deer populations within Rocky Creek Park and Yegua Creek Park have steadily increased over recent years and now are in greater numbers than the habitat can sustain in a healthy and viable state. During peak deer activity, it is typical to observe 75 to 120 deer along the roadways in each park. Distinct browse lines exist within these parks, evidence that vegetation within these parks is unable to support the deer demand for food. Deer are beginning to exhibit signs of malnutrition and overall health of the deer population is declining. Although discouraged, park visitors continue to hand-feed and/or toss food items to the deer. Deer are becoming increasingly dependent on such offerings, artificially increasing the carrying capacity of the parks and suppressing deer's natural fear of humans. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Fort Worth District, in partnership with TPWD, is currently conducting deer surveys to estimate the deer population within Rocky Creek Park and Yegua Creek Park.

Proposed Action and Alternatives. TPWD will provide specific deer harvest recommendations based upon the vegetative condition within the parks, recommended deer density for the area, and the estimated deer population. It is proposed that deer within Rocky Creek Park would be harvested at the recommended rate through expansion of the annual Challenged Hunters Deer Hunt in December 2007, followed by Yegua Creek Park in December 2008, to restore the deer population to healthy and sustainable numbers within Rocky Creek Park and Yegua Creek Park at Somerville Lake.

Trapping and relocating deer was explored, but TPWD no longer permits deer to be transported to other areas for several reasons; including stress on trapped/relocated deer, potential spread of disease and parasites, and overall high deer populations across the state. This alternative is not considered viable.

If no action is taken, the deer population is likely to continue increasing. Vegetation that deer depend upon for food will become further stressed and unable to regenerate new growth and/or new plants for the deer to utilize. Deer suffering malnutrition and overall poor health would likely become more common. Overpopulation of deer significantly increases the risk of spreading disease resulting in large-scale deer die-off and also increases the likelihood of deer being struck by vehicles.

In addition to the detrimental effect of overpopulation upon the deer itself, public safety may also become a greater concern. Deer will likely become further dependent upon park visitor food offerings and increase the likelihood of park visitor injuries, most especially from bucks during rutting season and does protecting fawns. Park visitors may also be injured when driving or riding in a vehicle in the event a deer is struck by a vehicle. Although these risks exist regardless of the deer density, the likelihood of such occurrences increases as the population increases.

Information Exchange Meeting. An information exchange meeting will be held on October 24, 2007 at 7:00 pm at the American Legion Hall located in Somerville, TX on 8th Street across from the high school football stadium to share information and receive public comments. For directions, please contact Somerville Lake Office at 979-596-1622.

Public Comment. Comments may be sent to *Natural Resources Manager, Somerville Lake Office, PO Box 549, Somerville, TX 77879* and must be received by November 14, 2007. For further information contact Ernest Eberle, Conservation Specialist at (979) 596-1622.

Martin H. Gustafson
Natural Resources Manager